

Child Labor Legislation

The Experience of Sparta and Athens Compared---Is the Proposed Legislation Helpful?

By J. M. DAVIS

The subject assigned me for discussion is one in which I have been profoundly interested for a number of years, and I have naturally given it the most careful consideration of which I was capable. It is a subject, furthermore, which has claimed the attention of the best minds of this and other great nations. What I shall say, however, in the brief time allotted me, will be based not so much upon what I have read on the subject as it will be upon my own personal observation. Some great and clear minds have approached a solution of our question, while other men, wise maybe in some lines of thought, lose themselves in a wilderness of confused ideas when they take up "Child Labor Legislation."

Of course, in such an audience as this there is no one who does not readily realize that the prosperity of our country and the integrity of the nation will in a few years rest upon the boys and girls of today. We hear this so often that the mere mention of the thought sounds commonplace to us; and yet, gentlemen, it is freighted through with a sacred truth. And the sacredness of this truth, Mr. President, is as dear to the hearts of the men at the head of our great cotton industries as it is dear to the hearts of any other class of men on God's green earth. If I can I want to clear the atmosphere in the outset of the impression that the management of our cotton mills is essentially the enemy of the children. Some people seem to think of us as a great dragon that annually requires the sacrifice of hundreds of tender boys and girls. We, together with all true forward looking men, desire to see the younger generation develop into citizens of lofty ideals, with well trained minds and strong bodies, and able, when duty or opportunities offer, to fill places of honor and responsibility in the industrial life of our nation.

This ideal condition can only be reached by the sane and honest thought of all of our best men united upon this one supreme task; and it will never be reached by the ill-advised and slipshod legislation of men essentially ignorant of the ills they would cure, and who are more interested in the retention of their office than they are in the permanent good of any legislation. Those who would contribute to the solution of the subject must approach it in the light of generations and not as if it could be solved by some two-by-four politician in some law-making body. Very little of the legislation thus far on this question has materially affected the welfare of the children—though many of the States have laws of some kind or another.

I was interested in reading the story of ancient Greece a few days ago. I find that Greece, long before the imperial city of Rome was even thought of, had her children's problem. The two leading cities of this wonderful people dealt with this question in exactly opposite ways.

Sparta took the child from the parents at the age of seven and made him the ward or child of the State. The parent had nothing more to do with the child. He, henceforth, owed everything to the State. Athens, on the other hand, left the child in the care of the parent. She conceded the mutual duty and obligation of parent and child, and aided both. The wisdom of this latter course has stood the test of future ages; and Athens, the home of philosophy, art and poetry, was wiser in nothing than in aiding rather than dogmatically dictating to the parent what his child should and should not do.

There are four requisites in the development of an ideal citizen. First, a strong and healthy body; second, genuine moral training which imbues the possessor with a high conception of honor and fair dealing with his fellows; third, a well trained mind,—enabling one to weigh well all sides of every proposition; and, fourth, an industrial training which teaches him the science of his particular vocation. Some of the great nations of the world today have advanced further in one or the other of these four phases of training than our own nation; but no one of them has so united them all or carried them to so high a degree of development as has our own country. We, in this country, consider each of these important in a well rounded citizenship.

If we consider these requisites concretely and apply them in our own

line of industry to the children that are in a measure entrusted to our care, we find a nation-wide interest in the development of the child along all lines by men and women of means and by large corporations. States have passed laws affecting the employment of children in mills, until at present very few States will allow children to be employed under fourteen years of age.

In this matter of legislation, the thing I wish to call special attention to is the gross misrepresentation of conditions in the mills and villages. Irresponsible agitation has also had its effect. The question has at last reached our national congress. A bill is now before the United States senate to prevent all children under fourteen years of age from working and those under sixteen years from working more than eight hours per day. I believe a great many of our law makers are honest and sincerely desire to support measures which they consider best for the child and the country,—but the average politician, both State and national, cares very little for the merits or demerits of a bill or for the child and family it may affect. If the bill is for the time popular and if by supporting it the politician can retain his office, he is ready to give it his "unqualified support."

I can further illustrate what I mean by referring you to the most common pre-election scene. Who here but has had opportunity to see the small politician (the two-by-four kind, and more are in this class than is generally believed) going around a few weeks before election kissing the babies, fondling the children, giving the old man the glad handshake and seeing something splendid to speak of everywhere, and who, if elected, reverses his whole attitude toward the very people he professed pleasure in associating with. It is no pleasure to refer to such conduct on the part of office seekers, and the fact that they can so conduct themselves and get elected ought to bring a blush of shame and a deep feeling of contempt to every genuine American. But we cannot deny that such conduct is common among us. The point is: can we conceive of such a man genuinely supporting any measure except for the reasons already referred to? Is he the one to solve or to have any part in the solution of this deep and sacred question? He must reform himself before he can live comfortably in the atmosphere in which the solution will finally be wrought out.

The very thing, to my way of thinking, that has hindered a proper solution of the question thus far has been the paid hireling who misrepresents conditions at the mills and the small politician, who by loud words and leather lunged speeches, proclaims in glowing terms the oppressed condition of the poor little factory child, and proceeds to help it by the enactment of laws which take from it its daily bread. The Bible must have meant some such thing as this when it speaks of a stone for a loaf or a scorpion for a fish!

We concede the right of a sovereign State to enact laws for the protection of her people and the development of her citizenship; but we do question the wisdom of negative laws which forbid the child to work without any provision for those who by some misfortune are more or less dependent upon their children for support, and, further still, to deny them the right to work without proper provision for their educational advancement.

The questions that come to every thinking man and woman are: Is the type of child labor legislation we have necessary? Or is it helpful? Or again, do these laws aid in the development of the child into a well rounded citizen? If these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, then such legislation most certainly has no place on our statute books.

The idealist and the dreamer has the impression that the enactment of negative laws such as most States have now will transform the children into healthy and well trained citizens. How may we hope for such splendid results when, under the law, the children are simply turned upon the streets without provision for training them? The proverb, "An idle brain is the Devil's workshop" applies no more to the father than to the son, no more to the mother than to the daughter.

It seems to me that we would be attacking the question from the right

angle. If instead of a child labor law, we had a compulsory education law, I take the position that the State should provide facilities for training the child, and then by law force the child into these training schools. This would develop them into useful citizens. But, at the same time, a way should be found by which the State might be able to render aid to those in actual need of the child's labor for support.

If the State is not prepared to take care of the children under fourteen years of age, then it has no moral right and should be unwilling to turn them upon the streets in idleness to become moral degenerates and a menace to the commonwealth.

Another brazen defect of these child labor laws is that they do not affect all children alike. A large part of our child population is lost sight of in this beneficent legislation. The little fellow twelve years of age may still be required to deliver papers in order to support his parents or to earn change for himself. Again, he may be required to work in hotels, in stores, in the Western Union or even as a messenger in legislative halls where bills are passed against child labor. I will not undertake to enumerate all the various kinds of work children may be allowed to do under this so-called child labor law. I merely take time to call attention to its shameful one-sidedness. Are not the children connected with all this different work worthy of the succor of our law makers? Oh, they will tell you the mill is unhealthy and the children otherwise engaged may get fresh air. They specially stress the fact that poor children in the country who are compelled to aid in making a living can get fresh air, but too often it is the case with children of poor farm tenants that fresh air is nearly all they do get. Many of you gentlemen came from the farm and you are familiar with the fact that the poor country family is living under the most unsanitary and therefore the most unhealthy conditions. Many of them live in houses of not more than two rooms, with small openings in the walls for windows. These windows are insufficient in both size and number. The water is from an old surface well that possibly has not been cleaned out for years. The only bath room is the nearby branch, and it is safe to assume that it is used only during the few hot months of the midsummer.

Yes, so far as the law is concerned, the children of these families may begin at any age, and in many instances not later than ten years, and work twelve hours per day for the entire year. Our law makers simply term them the "back bone of the nation" and commend their labor. But let one of these families move to a mill and in the eyes of our wise law makers these children have at once assumed a mythical sacredness and are the special recipients of child legislation. The further this question is analyzed, the bigger farce it seems to be.

Especially does the incorrectness of all the arguments about health and fresh air seem to me to become plain when it is pointed out that most of the mills of today are doing so much to safeguard the health of all their employees. Our mills are well ventilated and are equipped with the best scientific humidifiers. Germs are kept down by means of powerful disinfectants.

The child's welfare has been looked after and safeguarded by means of large expenditures of money by the mill management. Today may be seen in any up-to-date mill village ball parks, flower gardens, playgrounds, swimming pools with hot, cold or tempered water, good schools with both day and night classes, reading rooms, libraries, music, debating societies and regular Sunday religious service. These are not mere word pictures. They are facts,—facts we have worked out in our own mill, and I know of them in many other mills in our State and neighboring States.

Finally, I wish to say, the mill management does not wish to work children under fourteen years of age and in most of the cases where it is done it is more for the benefit of the child and his parents than it is for any monetary advantage to the mill.

To sum up then, it seems safe to conclude that the real friends of the children of the mills of the South are not the ill-advised and loose-thinking politicians, but the management of our mills; for our destinies are "one and inseparable, now and forever."

Card of Thanks.

We want to thank all of our friends and neighbors for their help to us and attention to our dear little baby girl during her illness and death. May God bless them all. With sincere appreciation.

Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Dorrohn.

BARBECUES

BARBECUE—We will give a first class barbecue at the Newberry hill, Friday, July 21. The dinner will be cooked by the old cook, H. M. Wicker. A good dinner is promised to all. Every candidate is especially invited. B. M. Suber and O. A. Felker.
6-9-td.

BARBECUE—I will give a first class barbecue with the usual good dinner at Mt. Pleasant on July 14, campaign day, and will give good service and make it pleasant for all who attend. G. H. Cromer and Company.
6-30-td.

WE WILL GIVE a first class barbecue in Mrs. Maffett's pasture at Silverstreet on Wednesday, July 12. Nice shady grove. All arrangements for the candidates to speak. Stand for the speakers. Seats for the listeners. All candidates are invited. Good dinner. C. B. Berry.
6-30-td.

BARBECUE—We will give a first class barbecue in front of B. B. Leitzsey's residence July 27, 1916. Everybody invited. B. B. Leitzsey, A. G. Leitzsey, J. F. Lominack.

BARBECUE at St. Pauls—Under the auspices of the ladies of the St. Pauls Lutheran church a barbecue will be served at the church grounds on July 15. The dinner will be cooked by that famous cueist J. D. H. Kibler.
5-23-td.

The School Improvement association of the St. Phillips school will give a barbecue in Mr. T. E. Half-acre's grove near the school house on August 4 for the benefit of the school. Everybody and the candidates are invited. There will be entertainment arranged for the young folk.

I will furnish a barbecue at Pomaria on campaign day August 1. Good dinner and pleasant day promised to all.

J. Walter Richardson.

We the undersigned will give a first class Barbecue at New Hope church, Saturday, July 29, 1916 for the benefit of the Broad River circuit parsonage. Everybody is invited to come out and enjoy the day with us and at the same time help a good cause.
Members.

CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE

The following is the schedule of the itinerary, opening at Spartanburg and closing at Winnsboro on August 26:

Columbia, Tuesday, July 4.
Lexington, Wednesday, July 5.
Saluda, Thursday, July 6.
Edgefield, Friday, July 7.
Aiken, Saturday, July 8.
Barnwell, Tuesday, July 18.
Hampton, Wednesday, July 19.
Beaufort, Thursday, July 20.
Ridgeland, Friday, July 21.
Walterboro, Saturday, July 22.
Charleston, Tuesday, July 25.
St. George, Wednesday, July 26.
Bamberg, Thursday, July 27.
Orangeburg, Friday, July 28.
St. Matthews, Saturday, July 29.
Sumter, Tuesday, August 1.
Manning, Wednesday, August 2.
Moncks Corner, Thursday, Aug. 3.
Georgetown, Friday, August 4.
Kingstree, Saturday, August 5.
Florence, Tuesday, August 8.
Marion, Wednesday, August 9.
Conway, Thursday, August 10.
Dillon, Friday, August 11.
Darlington, Saturday, August 12.
Bishopville, Tuesday, August 15.
Bennettsville, Wednesday, Aug. 16.
Chesterfield, Thursday, August 17.
Camden, Friday, August 18.
Lancaster, Saturday, August 19.
Union, Tuesday, August 22.
Gaffney, Wednesday, August 23.
York, Thursday, August 24.
Chester, Friday, August 25.
Winnsboro, Saturday, August 26.

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Our Loved Ones.
The following verses were written by a little 11 year old girl on the death of her grandfather, Mr. Thomas J. Boozer, who died last Tuesday at his home near Smyrna church. The angels came at last.
When my dear grandpa's life was past.

And took him to his heavenly home. There to live but not alone.
1913 and 1916 have been very sad years.

For two of our loved ones we have lost with many tears.

My dear little sister, Vennie May, left us

One sad May day

Some day, I, too, shall go.

Where I shall grieve no more;

Tender, yet rough, were my grandfather's hands,

But that did not matter, God needed

him among His band.
We hope to see our loved ones some day.

When all of our sorrows shall float away,

And our sins be forgiven,

So we may all live in heaven.

NOTICE.

All administrators, executors, guardians and other fiduciaries, are required by law to make an annual return, on or before the 1st day of July of each year.

All persons failing to do so, will under the law forfeit their commissions for handling the estates and will moreover be liable to be sued for damages by any person or persons interested in each estate.

C. C. Schumpert,
Judge of Probate.

June 1st, 1916.

TRAVEL THE BRIGHT WAY

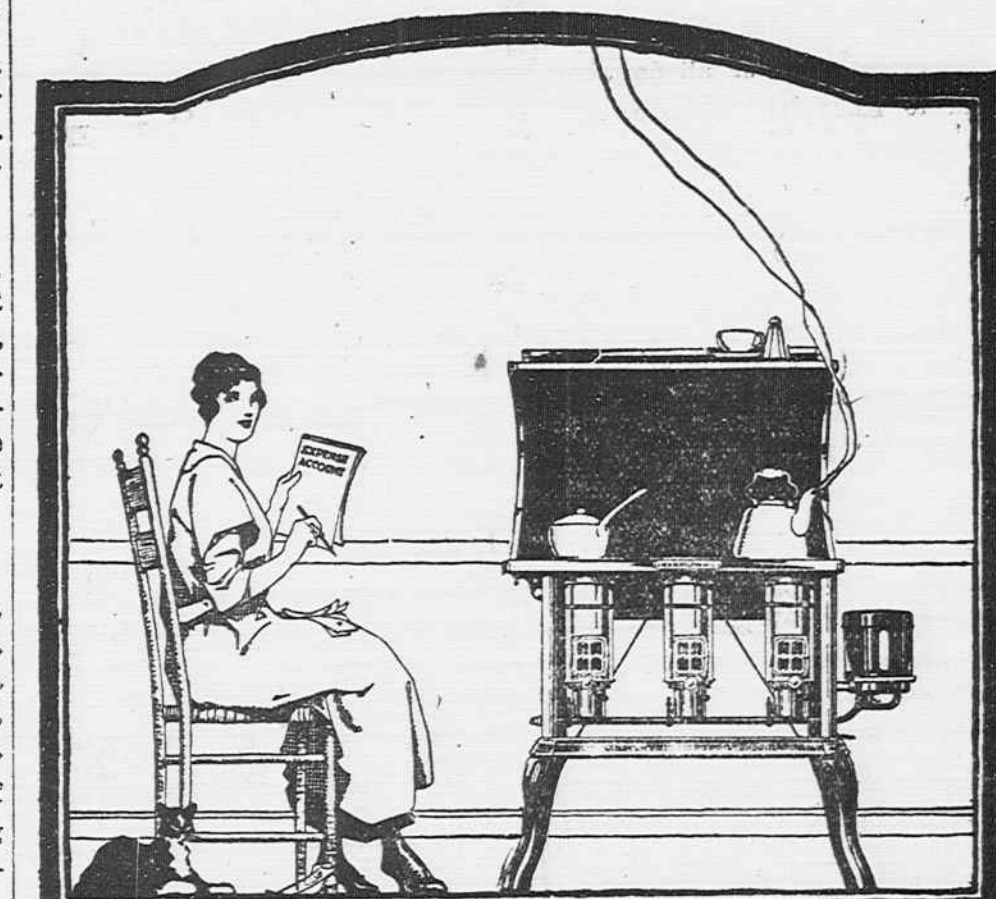
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